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Anatomy of the October Alert

Action Was Downstairs, President Was Upstairs

WASHINGTON—It is the night of Oct. 24, 1973. President Richard M. Nixon is facing what he described two days later as "the most difficult crisis we have had since the Cuban confrontation of 1962."

He is facing it, according to his aides, in the seclusion of his upstairs living quarters in the White House. That is where he stayed throughout the crisis, but that is all that is known, perhaps all that will ever be known, about his activities during the hours when American forces were placed on an alert, ready to counter any Russian movement of troops into the Suez Canal war zone.

In his press conference of Oct. 26, the President gave the clear impression that he had been in active charge of the American action. He said: "When I received that information I ordered shortly after midnight on Thursday morning, an alert for all American forces around the world. . . . I also proceeded on the diplomatic front. In a message to Mr. Brezhnev, an urgent message. . . ."

But on Oct. 24, while the President remained upstairs, the man who conceived the alert, Secretary of State Henry A. Kissinger, and the man who called it at 11:30 P.M., Secretary of Defense James R. Schlesinger, were two flights below in the basement Situation Room of the White House, running the crisis by their own fluorescent lights and telephoning Mr. Nixon periodically to obtain his approval for their actions.

And it is now certain that both the timing and exact nature of the alert were acted upon without the President's specific prior approval. Mr. Kissinger and Mr. Schlesinger acted alone after getting the President's earlier, general approval over the phone for an American policy that included both a firm political response and a military signal. And Mr. Kissinger now admits he was amazed when the alert, instead of remaining a quiet but clear signal to the United States, showed up the next morning in headlines and telecasts all over the United States.

What really happened that night

when the famous hot line between Washington and Moscow remained cold and Soviet and American diplomats scurried through the autumn darkness?

In the immediate aftermath, both Soviet officials and Mr. Kissinger briefly considered making public the entire strange exchange that led to the alert, including the note from Leonid Brezhnev to Washington which was later described as "brutal," "tough," or leaving "very little to the imagination."

At a news conference 12 hours after the alert was ordered, Mr. Kissinger was asked to detail the information that had made the alert necessary. Some reporters raised the possibility that the alert was designed chiefly to serve domestic political purposes by diverting attention from Mr. Nixon's Watergate problems. Seemingly more in sorrow than in anger that such doubts should be raised, Mr. Kissinger admitted that they were "a symptom of what is happening to our country" and pledged he would provide the full account—saying it would convince any skeptic—as soon as the emergency had passed.

Last week, with the United States and the Soviet Union once again cooperating, Mr. Kissinger said he "regretted" his earlier promise. To make the information public now, he said, might upset the rediscovered mood of cooperation. Intended or not, the net effect of the two press conference statements was that the Administration's most respected figure had stilled critics during the emergency with his promise of full disclosure, then withdrawn the promise when the public's concern with the crisis had passed. So there will be no official account for some time—perhaps not for years.

Although he would not provide the diplomatic and intelligence information that led to the alert, Mr. Kissinger was willing to talk about some aspects of the crisis. On the basis of talks with him and other American, Soviet and Israeli officials it is possible, however, to make a preliminary reconstruction of what



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now appears to have been less a full-blown crisis than a firm test of super-power wills and tactics.

The test began with the situation in the Middle East after three weeks of war, with Egyptian forces in what had been the Israeli-held Sinai and Israeli forces in what had been Egyptian-held Egypt, west of the Suez Canal.

A cease-fire had been accepted by both parties Oct. 22 and then breached, mainly by the Israelis, who completed encirclement of the Egyptian III Corps on the Suez east bank. The growing desperation of the Egyptians and their Soviet patrons prompted a radioed plea at 3 P.M. E.D.T. Oct. 24 by President Anwar el-Sadat for a joint American-Soviet task force to enter the region and enforce the cease-fire of Oct. 22. The Russians solicited this plea as a way to establish a sizable Soviet Force in the disputed Canal Zone.

But all was calm in Washington,

even though Soviet air and naval forces, including seven landing ships, were "milling about" the Mediterranean and seven Soviet airborne divisions with 40,000 troops were on the alert in Russia.

But there had been Soviet airborne troop alerts before and one more Soviet landing craft in the eastern Mediterranean earlier. As late as 5 P.M., Mr. Kissinger and Soviet Ambassador Anatoly Dobrynin were harmoniously discussing the details of implementing the cease-fire.

About 5 P.M., Ambassador Dobrynin returned to the State Department with a note from Mr. Brezhnev to Mr. Nixon, taking up President Sadat's plea for a joint American-Soviet expeditionary force. The note urged American support for the Russian proposal. Kissinger conferred with the President by phone and quickly handed the Russian envoy a reply with a firm no, explaining that it could be disastrous

to involve both superpowers in a tense situation on the ground.

And at the United Nations, the Soviet delegate in the Security Council, Yakov Malik, was accusing the United States of breaking the cease-fire bargain by allowing Israel to gain more Egyptian territory. He demanded that the United States accede to the Sadat request for a joint expeditionary force. The American delegate, John A. Scali, informed Mr. Kissinger of this development.

About 10:40 P.M., Ambassador Dobrynin returned with a second Brezhnev note to the President. After castigating the Israelis, it said, according to two officials who read it: "We strongly urge that we both send forces to enforce the cease-fire and, if you do not, we may be obliged to consider acting alone."

The threat of a unilateral insertion of Soviet forces into the battle zone was more implicit than explicit. But it's effect was electrifying.

The United States could have taken the suggestion of unilateral action in stride, Mr. Kissinger said later, yet juxtaposed with the rising demands of Mr. Malik at the United Nations, with the alert of Soviet airborne forces and the movement of Soviet landing craft, it signified the possibility of a really serious Russian military move.

Mr. Kissinger phoned Mr. Nixon again, recommending a firm political response, backed up by a military signal. The President agreed to the principle, but left Mr. Kissinger to decide what form the responses would take. Mr. Kissinger then convened a formal session of the seldom-used National Security Council. As constituted, the N.S.C. has six members, including the President. But Mr. Nixon was upstairs. Mr. Kissinger was there in his dual capacity as Mr. Nixon's adviser on national security affairs and as Secretary of State. Mr. Schlesinger was there as Defense Secretary. And that was it. There was no Vice President and no Director of the Office of Emergency Preparedness; the office has been vacant for 13 months. "Officially the meeting consisted of Kissinger, Schlesinger and Schlesinger," a council aide commented.

Belatedly called in for the 11 P.M. session was William Colby, director of the Central Intelligence Agency. Also present, as the military adviser, was General Brent Scowcroft, director of the Joint Chiefs of Staff.

The two principal participants, Mr. Kissinger and Mr. Schlesinger, swiftly agreed on the modified alert call

known as the Defense Condition 3, the middle on a scale of five alert stages.

After transmitting the alert to the service chiefs at 11:30 P.M., Mr. Schlesinger and Admiral Moorer discussed the situation for another two hours. Then they drove across the Potomac to put the finishing touches on the alert. They finished about 2:30 A.M. and went home to bed.

Mr. Kissinger repeatedly informed Israel's Ambassador Simcha Dinitz of the developments. This had the effect of letting Tel Aviv know that, while the United States was acting to prevent a Soviet landing, it would welcome an Israeli action to ease tensions along the Suez.

Retrospectively, it is safe to conclude the Soviet threat and the American alert caused the Israeli leadership to cease using the plight of the Egyptian III Corps to extract new concessions from Cairo and to allow the United Nations units to enter Suez Oct. 27.

Mr. Kissinger also drafted a note to Mr. Brezhnev for the President, firmly stating the United States would not tolerate a lone Soviet military move in the Middle East and urging Soviet cooperation in support of a United Nations resolution establishing a new peacekeeping force for the battle zone.

About 3 A.M. he went upstairs to Mr. Nixon and obtained the President's ratification of all these actions. Then both turned in.

Mr. Kissinger concluded that by this time the Soviet Union would have monitored the signals putting American forces on alert. The stiff note to Mr. Brezhnev was dispatched about 4 A.M.

About 7 A.M. Mr. Kissinger woke up to watch the television news and he was, he later recounted, astonished to learn that the alert call he had hoped to keep confined to the world of diplomacy was being broadcast to the American people.

From all this, it seems clear there was no actual crisis, but a potential crisis. That is why the President stayed upstairs and that is why the hot line was not used. Only after the news of the alert was broadcast, did Mr. Nixon decide to dramatize it as a crucial, personal face-off against the Russians.

In any case, a little more than 12 hours after the second Brezhnev note was delivered, the Soviet Union altered its stance in the United Nations, pledging support to the American resolution authorizing a United Nations peacekeeping force for the disputed Suez region. From then on the situation improved. —DAVID BINDER

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THE WASHINGTON POST

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Brezhnev Note: 'I Will Say It Straight'

By Marilyn Berger
Washington Post Staff Writer

Soviet Communist Party chief Leonid I. Brezhnev flatly told President Nixon on Oct. 24 that Moscow would "be faced with the necessity urgently to consider the question of taking appropriate steps unilaterally" if the United States refused to join in sending units to enforce the cease-fire in the Middle East.

The letter, which arrived at the White House late during the evening of Oct. 24, led to a worldwide alert of U.S. military forces.

The text of that strongly worded Soviet letter, and a paraphrase of the President's equally clear response became available to The Washington Post yesterday.

Brezhnev's letter, the second from him to arrive that evening, referred

to drastic Israeli violations of the Oct. 22 cease-fire leading to the encirclement of Suez city. The violations, according to the Soviet note, constituted a brazen challenge to both the Soviet Union and the United States. After inviting joint contingents of Soviet-American forces to compel observance of the cease-fire without delay, Brezhnev wrote:

"I will say it straight" that if the United States does not find it possible to act together "with us in this matter, we should be faced with the necessity urgently to consider the question of taking appropriate steps unilaterally."

Brezhnev told Mr. Nixon that Israel could not be permitted to get away with cease-fire violations.

This was the Brezhnev note that Mr. Nixon has said "was very firm and ...

left very little to the imagination as to what he intended." It was, according to Mr. Nixon "the most difficult crisis we have had since the Cuban confrontation of 1962."

The President made these remarks in his press conference Oct. 26 in defending his action in calling a worldwide alert. Critics of the administration have suggested that he overreacted in order to divert national attention from his deepening Watergate troubles. Six days before, on Oct. 20, Watergate Special Prosecutor Archibald Cox was fired and Attorney General Elliot L. Richardson and Deputy Attorney General William D. Ruckelshaus had resigned.

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Mr. Nixon refused, however, to make the exchange of letters with Brezhnev public. Secretary of State Henry A. Kissinger, who originally said that the record would be made available "upon the conclusion of the present diplomatic efforts," has since also sought to cut off public inquiry into the events that led to the alert.

The alert, according to U.S. officials, was designed to signal the Soviet Union that the United States could not accept unilateral Soviet action and also to heighten U.S. readiness if it became necessary to respond.

There is a continuing debate within the administration, however, as to whether a

worldwide alert including nuclear bombers was necessary or whether it would have been sufficient to alert selected units such as the 82d Airborne. Some officials, while agreeing that the Soviet note contained rough language, said it would have been sufficient to object strongly and do nothing with U.S. forces.

In addition to the signal provided by the alert, Mr. Nixon replied to Brezhnev, saying that the United States could not accept unilateral action by the Soviet Union. In his letter the President reaffirmed the understanding between the United States and the Soviet Union to work for peace in the Middle East but pointed out that this neither included nor warranted the sending of Soviet or American troops to Egypt.

The President also expressed doubt about the validity of Soviet charges that the Israelis were continuing to violate the cease-fire. The Soviet suggestion of unilateral action, he said, was something that must undoubtedly cause great concern and carry consequences that cannot be predicted in advance.

The President urged greater reliance on U.N. observers to supervise the Soviet Union, instead of launching unilateral action, to place compliance with the cease-fire. The United States, he told Brezhnev in conclusion, could not accept unilateral action.

Throughout the crisis the United States had sought to prevent super power intervention in the region, either

separately or jointly. In fact it is believed by some U.S. officials that Egyptian President Anwar Sadat's call on Oct. 16 for a joint Soviet-American force was similarly designed to forestall any unilateral Soviet "assistance."

Soviet officials have cooperated with American officials in refusing to make the entire record public, citing the sanctity of diplomatic communications and the need to preserve detente. But they deny that the Brezhnev note that touched off the U. S. alert was either brutal or threatening or provoking. Soviet officials have characterized the note — before it became available to The Washington Post — as an appeal to reason, an appeal to abide by the understandings reached with Kissinger during his visit to Moscow the week-end of Oct. 20.

Soviet officials said they were puzzled and surprised by the American reaction, which they say was both unexpected and unprovoked. But they admit to a degree of exasperation at signs that the situation in Egypt could have become so desperate that the Soviet Union might have been forced to do something extra if there was no performance on the ba-

sis of the understandings reached.

Nevertheless, they insist that they took no particular military action and say there was no crisis of the magnitude of 1962. Within two days, they note, everything was back on the track.

In addition to the Brezhnev letter, U.S. officials have cited other factors necessitating the alert, including movements of Soviet ships in the Mediterranean about 100 miles off the coast of Egypt, the end of the Soviet airlift (which might have made aircraft available for transporting Soviet airborne troops) and some "diplomatic ambiguities."

But some U.S. officials suggest there was an overreaction and a misreading of the signs growing out of a feeling in the administration of being besieged—partly because of the Watergate scandal—and because of the suspicious nature of both the President and Kissinger.

Others, however, insist the response was commensurate with the threat and that it was clear to the top officials who met the night of Oct. 24-25 that the Brezhnev note was a threat to be reckoned with. They say it was necessary to move quickly because, if the

Russians moved unilaterally they would move quickly to prevent an Egyptian defeat.

As for the Israelis, they had no doubt that the U.S. response was required. Foreign Minister Abba Eban said when he was here last week that there was "definite, authentic, real and imminent danger" of Soviet military intervention. He said that "if the response had been any less clear . . . we would have faced the contingency with all it means for the fate of Europe and international peace."

What Eban and the President and Kissinger feared did not occur. Whether the Russians are saying now that they never meant to threaten only because they did not actually send forces cannot be known. And whether it was the U.S. response that deterred Soviet action or whether the Soviet Union never meant to act and were only testing the administration's ability to react while preoccupied by the Watergate scandal are the hypothetical questions of history.

As one U.S. official put it, "Since we don't know what could have happened had we acted differently we can only say what has happened. And what has happened is that the Soviets did not intervene."

Official Versions Differ

NSC: Did It Meet Oct. 24?

By Laurence Stern
Washington Post Staff Writer

In popular mythology, the National Security Council is the nation's ultimate crisis forum.

It was in this spirit, perhaps, that Secretary of State Henry Kissinger and Defense Secretary James R. Schlesinger referred to a National Security Council meeting on the night of Oct. 24 when American military forces were placed on world-wide alert.

Now the White House acknowledges that there was no meeting of the National Security Council on that night of putative international peril when the word was flashed to U.S. air, ground and sea forces to go into a high state of readiness.

"That meeting is not in our formal listing of National Security Council meetings," said NSC staff Secretary Jeanne W. Davis. This was corroborated by the White House press office.

Yet Kissinger, in his Oct. 25 press conference, said the President called "a special meeting of the National Security Council" at 3 a.m. that same day to order the precautionary alert.

Kissinger added that "all the members of the National Security Council were unanimous in their recommendations as the result of a deliberation in which the President did not himself participate, and

in which he joined only after they had formed their judgment . . ."

Defense Secretary Schlesinger, the same day, said it was he who initiated the alert after a meeting of the "abbreviated National Security Council," though he added that "the President was in complete command at all times during the course of the evening."

Kissinger said the NSC meeting took place at 3 a.m. on the 25th. Schlesinger timed it at 11 p.m. on the 24th. The President said it was he who ordered the precautionary alert shortly after midnight on the 25th after "we obtained information which led us to believe that the Soviet Union was planning to send a very substantial force into the Mideast, a military force."

White House records list only two meetings of the National Security Council during 1973. One was on March 8 and one on April 12. White House spokesmen would not divulge the topic of either meeting.

The meeting that occurred the night of Oct. 24 or the early morning hours of Oct. 25—depending on whose version is accurate—included only two of the four statutory members of the council, Secretary of State Kissinger and Secretary of Defense Schlesinger. The other two members are the President and the Vice Presi-

dent. Mr. Nixon was, by all current accounts, upstairs in the White House while his cabinet aides were meeting in the basement Situation Room.

There was no ready explanation of why two Cabinet officers, both famous for their Washington bureaucratic street wisdom and for their precision of public ut-

terance, should be in disagreement with the White House and NSC over whether the meeting in which they both participated was or was not an NSC meeting.

In practice formal NSC meetings have become among the rarest of Washington phenomena. The two meetings this year compared with three meetings in 1972 when the administration was engaged in the summitry and extrication from Vietnam.

"The formal NSC meeting is a cosmetic fiction," in the view of a former high-ranking staff member. "As a forum it has become unwieldy. There are people there the President may not want to be there. Papers have to be written that bureaucrats receive and circulate."

"It hadn't been used in the original textbook sense since the Eisenhower years." Nevertheless Presidents and their press spokesmen have persistently fostered the notion that in moments of national gravity the NSC, in its collective wisdom, has provided benediction to the policies finally adopted.

After the Tet offensive in Vietnam in January 1968, for example, President Johnson called an NSC meeting and invited news photographers in to record the high seriousness of the occasion. It was not until days and weeks later that the policy responses to the Tet attack were decided.

More recently, in the controversy over falsified U.S. bombing reports in Cambodia, former Secretary of Defense Melvin R. Laird said the orders for falsification of the reports came from the National Security Council early in 1968. One former USC staffer, whose business it was to know the NSC agenda during that period, said he had no recollection of bombing policy in Cambodia being on the Council agenda.

Below the level of the full Council, the intensity of activity picks up. The NSC staff is a study in perpetual motion. Since the arrival of Kissinger as National Security Adviser to the President, its members have worked the longest hours in town.

Under Kissinger the Council staff divides and subdivides into various working groups dealing with the myriad issues—from the possibility of a government toppling in Latin America to the hardness of Soviet missile sites—which form the President's perceptions of national security.

Mideast.

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INTELLIGENCE REPORTS indicate that Russia did send nuclear weapons to Egypt during the Mideast war, although Kissinger has hedged on the question. Nuclear missile warheads apparently were sent by ship to Alexandria but weren't unloaded. Nixon hadn't heard the news when he ordered U.S. forces on alert.

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The Washington Merry-Go-Round

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D21

Shippers Tapped for Nixon Funds

By Jack Anderson

Confidential Senate Watergate documents show that salty-tongued Federal Maritime Commission chairwoman Helen Bentley collected at least \$20,000 in donations for the Nixon campaign from the shipping industry she supposed to regulate.

The documents describe Mrs. Bentley's dealings with the veteran shipper, Captain Leo Berger, a partner in Avon steamships of Lake Success, Long Island. Both were interviewed by committee investigators in recent weeks.

A summary of Mrs. Bentley's brief interview with committee counsel William Mayton reports: He asked her a few times in many different ways if she ever solicited money for the 1972 campaign and she always responded negatively."

When Berger was cross-examined, however, he confessed that he and his partner, Peter Conostas, gave "\$20,000 in cash to Mrs. Bentley which she gave to Stans." Former Commerce Secretary Maurice Stans was President Nixon's chief fund raiser and is now under criminal indictment in the campaign contributions case of financier Robert Vesco.

The summary quotes Mrs.

Bentley as telling the Senate Watergate staff that "the Avon Shipping Company had no business before her" when she passed the campaign hat. "They gave her the money because they knew that she was a Republican, and they wanted the money," according to the summary of her testimony, "to go to the GOP."

The truth is that Avon, like most shipping companies, did have business before the Federal Maritime Commission. Such firms must get certification from the commission under Mrs. Bentley that they have financial means to pay for cleaning up any oil spills.

We reached Mrs. Bentley, who explained yeastily that she had told the committee staff about the certification question herself, and could not understand why it was left out of the summary of her interview.

At Avon, Captain Berger defended the chairwoman, saying there had been no solicitation. His campaign contribution, he said, "was voluntary." Then he added brusquely: "I said everything I'm going to say before the committee. Goodnight."

Despite the gruff sea captain's modesty about his contributions, our investigation backs

up the Watergate committee's finding. The records of secret cash contributions to the Nixon campaign show a "Captain Leo Berger" and "Peter Conostas," both listed at Avon's Lake Success address, each gave \$10,000.

Footnote: In September, 1970, we reported how Mrs. Bentley was asked by then Vice President Spiro Agnew to pass the hat in shipping circles for an Agnew crony running for governor of Maryland. Dutifully, she contacted about ten "top echelon shipping executives," she admitted.

Intelligence Digest—Intelligence reports warn that the Kremlin has been pressuring the Arab nations to nationalize western oil holdings. The reports suggest that the Soviets may hope to start tapping the Arab oil fields for themselves, because their own oil fields in rugged Siberia are becoming increasingly difficult to develop. . . . Diplomatic reports indicate that the NATO allies may be closing ranks after their initial shock over the Arab oil embargo. At first, the NATO partners began scrambling for themselves for vital oil supplies. But allied leaders, apparently, have suddenly been

jolted into recognizing the danger of dividing the West. Quiet new moves have been made to restore more consultation and cooperation. . . . One intelligence report tells of an exchange between the cease-fire negotiators, Israel's Maj. Gen. Ahron Yariv and Egypt's Lt. Gen. Mohamed Gamas. Yariv asked whether they should turn the negotiations over to civilians. Gamas readily agreed. "Tomorrow," he said, "let us return in civilian clothes." . . . A State Department telegram, intended for official eyes only, reveals how the U.S. has been aiding the nation that has cut off our oil. The U.S. has established a military logistical support system for Saudi Arabia. Because the Saudi army hasn't developed "the required degree of expertise" to manage the system, states the telegram, "limited U.S. (government's) assistance will be required." . . . Intelligence reports quote Saudi Arabian leaders as saying one reason for the oil boycott was to break what they believed to be the Zionist hold on the U.S. press and bring the Arab story forcibly to the attention of the American public.

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Mid East

UNDERESTIMATED ARABS

U.S. Knew Battle Plans

By George Sherman

Star-News Staff Writer

American intelligence last April obtained the complete Egyptian battle plan for the recent Middle East war, but never concluded "D-Day" existed for carrying it out, according to informed sources.

U.S. intelligence also obtained the Syrian plan of attack, say the sources, but not until September—several weeks before the Oct. 6 war. Because the American government relied heavily on U.S. military attaches, who relied in turn on skeptical Israeli assessments, it knew the Egyptian nor Syrian battle plans were taken seriously.

The Egyptian plan, according to sources who

we studied it, had three legs:

First, to cross the Suez Canal in force in the central and southern sectors and smash the Israeli Bar Lev line on the eastern bank.

Second, to regroup forces and smash through the Mitla and Giddi passes and other pass at Pasa leading to the large Israeli base Bir Gafgafa guarding the interior Sinai.

Third, to take the whole Sinai, cut off Sharm el Sheikh on the Gulf of Aqaba, and to stop at the borders existing before the June 1967 war. According to these sources, the plan did not call for pushing an attack into the heartland of Israel.

As it turned out, after the Oct. 6 attack, only the first

stage of the plan succeeded. American intelligence has concluded that the Bar Lev fortifications fell so quickly. Egyptian tank and infantry, that the Egyptian high command was not ready to move that quickly against the passes to prevent Israeli defenses from holding.

A KEY element in this initial Egyptian success was the Soviet "Sagger" anti-tank gun, operated by two-man infantry teams, which destroyed about 200 Israeli tanks.

Evidence shows, say American analysts, that it took Russian prodding to get the Egyptian forces to move against all three of the passes on Oct. 14—eight days after the war began. By that time, however, Israeli reserves were in place and the Egyptian attack was repulsed.

The Syrian plan called for swift tank attacks up the main road from Damascus and along the secondary road through the Rafid salient to recapture the Golan Heights from Israel. According to Defense Department analysts, this Syrian push, involving between 800 and 1,000 tanks, failed because it rushed too far ahead of its infantry and anti-aircraft defenses and fell prey to Israeli air power.

According to other sources, only a small number of U.S. analysts in the American intelligence community had been cautioning the Nixon administration since May to take seriously the Egyptian battle plan. This minority was hampered by not having an advance date for the attack, as well as by "the established truth" in both the American and Israeli governments that the Arabs must be bluffing because of inferior military capabilities.

See BATTLE, A-6

MEMBERS of the minority acknowledge that their predictions of an Egyptian attack were never more than 60-40 in favor of an attack. They key arguments throughout the last summer and fall were over Egyptian President Anwar Sadat's political intention—

especially, how he would try to force the United States and the Soviet Union to intervene for a peace settlement.

Back in early June analysts who took the Egyptian battle plan and Arab militants' pressures on Sadat seriously argued that the U.N. Security Council debate on the Middle East in June and July could be decisive.

If Egypt failed to gain new momentum toward superpower involvement, they said, the pressure for limited military action would become irresistible.

On July 25, the United States vetoed a Security Council resolution which, in the American view, sided with the Egyptian position that Israel must agree to evacuate all occupied Arab territory prior to negotiations. In both the American and Israeli view, this course would leave Israel without secure boundaries.

DURING the October war, the Egyptian government charged that this American position led directly to the Cairo decision to use force. But by September, argue administration officials, Kissinger, by then secretary of State, was at the U.N. deeply involved in a new Middle Eastern initiative. Therefore, intelligence analysts concluded, Egypt and Syria had no need to doubt that the United States was focusing on the Middle East without their resorting to force.

In retrospect, say analysts, they were victims mainly of Israeli over-confidence, but also of a failure to see how well the Russians had taught the Egyptians to deflect attention. During September tell-tale signs of Arab intentions were there. They included full-scale Egyptian

"maneuvers" during September and a large movement of Syrian tanks toward the Golan Heights just before Oct. 6.

The Egyptian maneuvers mirrored similar Soviet and Warsaw Pact tactics just

before their attack on Czechoslovakia in August 1968. But, according to U.S. sources, the bluff was so firm that this evidence still led to a majority intelligence view that the evidence was "inconclusive."

The final and most decisive Egyptian move came late on Oct. 4, little more than 24 hours before the attack. The Egyptian high

command switched from radio to direct telephone-line communications with the Suez front, because radio is easier to monitor by outside intelligence.

But by that time it was too late. The Egyptians and Syrians had attacked before this final evidence was laid before Kissinger in an intelligence assessment early on Oct. 6.